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ABSTRACT

Based on the theoretical concepts and research methodology of Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen, a study examined the emblems (gestures with exact verbal meanings) of Punjabi (India) immigrants in Canada. A limited repertoire of 63 emblems was elicited from nine Punjabi informants and then shown to nine Canadian citizens and one United States citizen, all of European descent. The results supported the general conclusion of Ekman and Friesen that pan-cultural emblems tend to refer to body functions and the simplest human activities, while culture-specific emblems tend to refer to more complex human activities. (A list of the 63 emblems is included, with descriptions of the emblems, their meanings, the domains in which they are used, comments from the Punjabi informants, and the degree to which the emblems were understood by the Canadian and United States Citizens.) (RL)

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GESTURES OF INDIA
A STUDY OF EMBLEMS AMONG
PUNJABI RESIDENTS OF CANADA

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Introduction and Theoretical Background

Nonverbal behaviour plays a major role in the communications systems of every culture, and the 1970's have seen a burgeoning interest, both scholarly and popular, in the subject. Among the leading researchers in the field, Ekman and Friesen (1969) present the clearest and most comprehensive scheme of categories for the immensely varied and complex spectrum of what has been called "the silent language". They posit five categories of nonverbal behaviour, based on three fundamental considerations--origin, usage, and coding--and strengthened by extensive empirical investigation, and thus impose an orderly framework on an otherwise chaotic realm. Their work provides the theoretical background for this study, and their research methods have helped to guide my own. Hence I will set forth the salient features of their theoretical and methodological approach to nonverbal behaviour, with special attention to one of their five categories, emblems. Then I will turn to describe my own methodology, to briefly examine other studies of emblems, to sketch the cultural context of emblems in India, and finally to present my findings.

Emblems have the most clearly discernible characteristics of the five categories presented by Ekman and Friesen. They are nonverbal acts whose meaning can be expressed by a direct verbal translation of one or two words or at most a short phrase. Most or all members of the group, class, or culture by which the emblem is used will understand its meaning. A simple practical test to determine if a particular act falls into this category is whether its message can be put into words without significantly altering the conversation in which it occurs. Those who use emblems do so with deliberate intent to send a particular message, and usually admit to having sent it, while those who receive the message not only know its meaning but also know that it was deliberately sent to them. (Ekman & Friesen, 1972, p 357) The "OK" gesture and the "finger" are examples of two emblems widely used in North America and elsewhere.

Emblems differ most sharply from the other categories in their usage, defined as the "regular and consistent circumstances surrounding the occurrence of a nonverbal act". (Ekman & Friesen, 1969, p 53) This concept includes several different features: 1) the external conditions in which the nonverbal act occurs, 2) the relationship of the act to associated verbal behaviour, 3) the person's awareness of performing the act, 4) his intention to communicate, 5) feedback from the person witnessing the act, and 6) the type of information sent by the act. Emblems occur most usually in external conditions in which various factors such as excessive noise,

distance, or organic impairment of hearing prevent normal verbal exchange. Emblems also differ from the other categories by their exact translatability into words, their user's awareness of them, and their user's intention to communicate. Feedback from the receiver and the type of information conveyed do not differentiate emblems from several other categories of nonverbal acts. Like these other acts, emblems often evoke feedback from the receiver and convey information resting on meaning common to a specified group rather than peculiar to a single individual. (Ekman & Friesen, 1969)

Emblems differ little from the other categories in their origins. They, like most of the others, are learned, and vary to a large extent from culture to culture (though some of them appear to be highly similar in many cultures). Likewise, their coding--the rules which explain how behaviour contains or conveys information--fails to set them apart. Coding displays three divisions, namely, arbitrary, iconic, and intrinsic. The former two, both labelled extrinsic, indicate that an act signifies or stands for something else, while the latter indicates that the act itself is its own significant, i.e., the meaning of the act is intrinsic to the act itself. In arbitrary coding, the act has no visual resemblance to what it stands for, while in iconic coding the act bears some likeness to what it represents. Emblems, like several other categories, display both arbitrary and iconic coding, but usually not intrinsic coding. An example of arbitrary coding would be a finger sign

representing but not resembling a letter of the alphabet, while an example of iconic coding would be a finger sign closely resembling the letter for which it stood. Iconic emblems, unlike their arbitrary counterparts, can sometimes be understood across cultural boundaries. (Ekman & Friesen, 1969, pp 49-65)

Methodology

In one of his more recent articles, Ekman describes a three-stage process for uncovering emblem repertoires. (Ekman, 1976) In the first stage informants give performances of what they believe to be emblems within their own group or culture. Merely asking informants to volunteer emblems proves unprofitable since many of them can remember only a few. Ekman uses a list of verbal messages gathered from the emblems of several cultures to elicit emblems from informants and to stimulate them to add others not on the list. After ten or fifteen informants, few new emblems are discovered and it is assumed that a largely complete emblem repertoire for that particular group or culture has been gathered.

In the second stage, performances of each emblem--ideally recorded on film or videotape--are compared, and if over half of the informants either give no performance for a particular verbal message on the list or give dissimilar performances, the item is dropped. Since this step does not suffice to eliminate inventions of emblems, Ekman finds it necessary to use a third stage in which a new group of informants from the same culture sees the emblems, interprets

their meaning, and indicates their authenticity. (Ekman, 1976) The final collection of emblems presumably embodies a largely complete and reliable emblem repertoire.

My own methodology has incorporated much of Ekman's, though unfortunately omitting the use of film or videotape. I have also added another step in which the emblems known to my informants were shown to members of the culture in which they lived as immigrants. I collected emblems from a group of five Indians all of whom come from the Punjab-Haryana-Delhi area of northwest India. Since India is a nation of great diversity, in fact a multi-national state, it seemed prudent to confine my investigations to one of the many geographical areas within its borders. Even though my sample is far too small for adequate generalizations, the data suggests that emblem repertoires vary from one religious group to another even within a relatively small area.

In my first step, I explained the major characteristics of emblems to my informants (all were interviewed separately) sometimes using Hindi, sometimes English. I usually gave them one or two examples from the North American repertoire to make doubly clear what I was looking for. Then I asked them to show and to explain as many emblems as they could remember. In every case, they found it difficult to remember more than a few, so I found it necessary to show them lists of emblem messages collected by two previous investigators of emblems in other cultures. (Johnson, Ekman & Friesen, 1975;

Sparhawk, 1978) This technique not only produced many emblems from messages on the lists, but also elicited others not on the lists. Whenever I had doubts as to whether a particular act qualified as an emblem, I recorded it in any case, believing that a too critical approach would inhibit my informants from giving all the emblems that they might know. At the end of this first step I had approximately 115 possible emblems.

My five informants, all male, included two students, a professor, an employee of IBM, and a free-lance artist and writer. Four were Hindu, one a Sikh. With this small group of informants (ten or fifteen would have been better) and a limited time, the repertoire of emblems gathered was almost certainly incomplete. Nevertheless, my informants gave me enough emblems to provide a basis for some interesting generalizations and stimulating possibilities for future research.

My second step was to show all the emblems I had collected to a group of four new informants, all of whom also came from the Punjab-Haryana-Delhi area. (I did not use Ekman's second stage to any great extent, first because I did not use my emblem message lists systematically but only to stimulate my informants, and second because there proved to be very little difference of opinion among my informants on how emblems they recognized should be performed). During this step I eliminated any emblems which only one or two of my informants understood, and retained those which three or four understood. This resulted in reducing the approximately 115 emblems to 63

(duplications also reduced the original number). Roughly 40 of these were understood by all four of my informants, and about 20 by three of them. During the second step I continued to use both Hindi and English, and in one case almost entirely Hindi.

The four informants for the second step, three males and one female, included a professor, a graduate student, a laborer, and a Montessori teacher. All were Hindus. I found it necessary to explain the external conditions in which the emblem occurred in several cases (in the same way that it had been explained to me) since ambiguity would have resulted otherwise. Here I must take issue with Ekman who states that "if an action is truly an emblem, then the message it stands for is unambiguous even when the action is seen totally out of context." (Ekman, 1976, p 15) For example, all of the second group of informants agreed on one emblem, a few sharp downward nods of the head. This emblem had two quite different meanings depending on the distance between the sender and the receiver and the noise level. At a distance and when noise made verbal messages difficult it meant "Come here." When close by during a quiet conversation it meant "Yes" or "I am listening". Elsewhere in the same article Ekman does admit that "social context also modifies the emblem message". (Ekman, 1976, p 24) Furthermore, since emblems, unlike any other nonverbal acts, have an exactly translatable meaning we can think of them very much as we would think of words. If we pronounced the word

"read" with no further context our listener would not be able to tell whether he was being commanded to pick up a book or to turn his thoughts to a species of water plant. If verbal homonyms can be ambiguous without context, why not emblem "homonyms"?

Before describing my third step, I will pause to mention some of the difficulties I encountered and how they could be remedied in future studies. In the second step, I found that my own rendition of the emblems in some, though not in many cases led to misunderstanding. Apparently one can have an incorrect pronunciation or an accent in emblem language! In future investigations it would prove much better to record the emblems as made by the informants themselves. In the absence of film or videotape, since circumstances do not always permit their use, the investigator should be at pains to practice any difficult emblems until his performance satisfies his informant.

Another difficulty arose in the form of my tendency on occasion to give verbal and nonverbal signals of "right" and "wrong" during the second and third steps of my investigation. Knowing the meaning given to any particular emblem by the original informant made it sometimes difficult to avoid giving positive or negative feedback to the second group of informants. Here the more neutral medium of film or videotape would serve well by focussing the informant's attention not on the researcher but on the recorded version of the emblem, and by allowing the

researcher to play his proper role of a neutral recording agent more easily.

Still another difficulty was deciding how much of the context in which a particular emblem is used should be given to the second and third group of informants. Too little context in some cases caused the emblem to appear ambiguous or meaningless. Too much context meant the informant could guess the meaning from the context alone. Filming or videotaping the emblem in the actual circumstances of its use could prove to be the ideal solution, since it would provide a context without stressing any particular element of that context.

Finally, I encountered the difficulty of having a somewhat heterogeneous sample of informants for the first and second steps. While all nine came from the same relatively small area of India, religious differences (Sikh-Hindu), differences in residential areas (rural-urban), educational differences, differences in time spent in Canada, and perhaps sex differences seem to have had some influence on the collecting and verifying of emblems. For example, the four Hindu informants of the second step confirmed about 75% of the approximately 95 emblems given by the four Hindu informants of the first step, but only about 40% of the approximately 20 emblems given by the Sikh informant. It seems clear that the researcher must strive to obtain the most homogenous sample of informants possible. Else he may find himself in the unenviable position of trying to learn German from Frenchmen.

While the Ekman-Friesen methodology seems basically sound, my own investigations point to two important methodological considerations not sufficiently dealt with. First, the researcher must face the problem of outside cultural influences. It may prove important to determine which emblems are indigenous to the culture in question and which have been borrowed from other cultures, just as linguists find it useful to distinguish native words from outside incorporations. A good "dictionary" of emblems should include something of their "etymology" or we face the danger of attributing independent origins to "pan-cultural" emblems which may have been borrowed through cultural diffusion. While Ekman and Friesen recognize this problem to some extent, they present no adequate methodological tool for dealing with it. To be fair, they have used preliterate cultures with little outside contact to test supposedly pancultural emblems, but this does not solve the problem of how to distinguish indigenous from borrowed emblems in cultures with extensive outside contacts. For example, Hindu culture in India makes wide use of the namaste emblem (joined hands held vertically in front of the chest) for greeting and departure as well as for prayer and worship. Since the same emblem is widely used in other cultures as a gesture of prayer, should we conclude that it originated independently in India or that it was borrowed?

One answer to such questions lies in the second methodological consideration, namely, the investigator must have more than a superficial knowledge of the culture whose

emblems (or other nonverbal acts) he is studying. Otherwise he not only runs the risk of failing to distinguish between indigenous and borrowed emblems, but also of missing potential emblems which someone more familiar with the culture would not overlook. To some extent the investigator can hope to receive emblems not on his list through the active cooperation of his informants, but such procedures fall short of the ideal. The investigator should be familiar enough with the culture to add potential emblem messages to the list he presents to his informants. Knowing the verbal language of that culture gives him still greater advantages since he reduces the risk of mis-translations occasioned by using go-betweens, increases the rapport with his informants, better understands the relationship between verbal and nonverbal behaviour in that culture, and acquires more fluent and natural descriptions of the emblems he seeks.

Some investigators of emblems have recognized the relevance of historical and cultural knowledge. Efron (1972, p 123) shows that some of the symbolic gestures he found among twentieth century Southern Italian immigrants in the United States can be traced to medieval times, while others can be traced as far back as ancient Greece and Rome. Morris (1979) provides extensive historical and cultural commentary for twenty emblems widely used in Europe. The namaste or namaskara emblem of Hindu culture mentioned above occurs in terracotta human figurines discovered at Harappa, one of the great cities

of the Indus Valley civilization that flourished in ancient India more than 4,000 years ago. (Banerjea, 1956, pp 251-252)

The third step of my investigation consisted of showing the verified emblems, 63 in number, to nine residents of Canada and one resident of the United States, all of European descent. The five males and five females included two students, four professors, and two secretaries, all connected with the University of Windsor, and two other adults. I chose equal numbers of males and females in hopes of discovering sex-based differences in their responses to the emblems. I demonstrated each of the emblems--in no particular order--to each of my informants separately, after explaining the general characteristics of emblems and giving one or two examples from the North American repertoire. Where I felt it necessary, I gave a brief explanation of the context in which particular emblems occurred. I did not identify the culture from which the emblems came. If asked, I refused to do so until I had finished recording the responses to all of the emblems. In one case, a professor who immediately recognized the namaste emblem, I considered it necessary to deliberately mislead him by telling him that the emblems came from several cultures. By not identifying the cultural origins of the emblems, I hoped to avoid the influence of any cultural stereotypes my informants might have. In each case I asked the informant to give his or her first reaction to my demonstration of the emblem, and assured them that a confused or puzzled reaction

was perfectly acceptable. After I had recorded all the responses I explained the meaning of any emblems which had aroused my informant's curiosity.

By means of this third step I hoped to explore a number of areas, namely, how well do members of one culture understand the emblems of another, which kinds of emblems do they most frequently understand, which types do they usually misunderstand, whether different cultures show more or less development in various emblem domains (subject areas such as statements about one's own physical state, interpersonal directions or commands, and standard replies), and whether males and females show different responses to the same emblems or emblem domains. Though the extremely modest scale of this study does not allow any definitive answers to such questions, it does permit some very tentative answers which may prove fruitful for further research.

Other Studies of Emblems

Several studies of emblems have appeared since Efron's classic study of gesture among immigrant Jews and Italians in the United States nearly forty years ago. Some have used the methods suggested by Ekman and Friesen. These include a study of Persian emblems, one of Israeli students living in the United States, one of middle-class, white, American males, and Ekman and Friesen's own studies of urban Japanese and the South Fore people of Papua, New Guinea.

(Ekman, 1976, p 18; Johnson, 1975, pp 335, 337, 345; Sparhawk, 1978, pp 49, 85, 86) Other studies have contrasted Columbian and North American gestures, or examined Arabic, French, Spanish, Mexican, Greek, Tibetan, Venezuelan, Danish, Japanese, and other gestures. (Morris, 1979, pp 272-292) One scholar has turned his attention to vocal emblems (sounds which meet the criteria for emblems and which are not words) while two others have dealt with gestural communication in preschool children. (Ekman, 1976, p 18; Johnson, 1975, pp 335, 337, 345)

Two recently published studies by scholars using the methodology of Ekman and Friesen for data collecting proved helpful to me in carrying out my own research. Sparhawk (1978) gave me valuable hints on procedures from an investigator who, like myself, could not use videotape facilities during the collecting and verifying of emblems. Her list of over 100 emblem messages furnished a useful stimulant to my informants. Johnson, Ekman, and Friesen (1975) not only provided further hints on data collection and another list of emblem messages, but also a number of stimulating question areas such as the commonality of emblems within or across cultures, compound and complex emblems, and emblem domains in different cultures. (Johnson et alia, 1975)

To the best of my knowledge, no one else has carried out a study of emblems of India using the theory and methodology of Ekman and Friesen. In view of the facts outlined in the following section, it seems surprising that most scholars

of nonverbal behaviour have apparently overlooked this extraordinary rich and ancient culture.

The Cultural Context of Emblems in India

A thorough study of emblems used in India should prove exceptionally rewarding, since Indian civilization boasts an extremely varied and ancient repertoire of symbolic hand gestures known as mudras or hastas which appear in painting and sculpture, in several classical dance traditions, in literature, in worship and ritual, and in everyday life. These mudras certainly display most or all of the characteristics of emblems in many cases. Let us briefly examine two of the major forms in which they appear, religious sculpture and the classical dance.

The symbolic hand gestures of Indian sculpture remind one of emblems frozen in stone. Like emblems, many of them have a meaning which can be expressed by a direct verbal translation of a few words, and this meaning was and is certainly known to many Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain worshippers. Those who carved these statues certainly did so with the deliberate intention of representing a certain message, and those who received it must certainly have known of this intention. Thus these gestures meet the essential criteria for emblems set forth earlier.

Descriptions of several common mudras will illustrate this point further. The abhaya mudra, consisting of a hand raised with the palm toward the viewer, is one of the

most widely-used gestures, appearing both in Hindu and Buddhist sculpture. Its meaning can be translated as "Fear not". It stands for "the assurance of fearlessness, tranquility and protection given by the deity to his worshipper". (Banerjea, 1966, p 251; Gupte, 1972, p 3) Another widely-used mudra, the varada mudra, consisting of a hand held downward with the palm toward the viewer, also appears in both Hindu and Buddhist sculpture. Its meaning can be rendered as "I give you blessings" or "I grant you a favor". Another very common and extremely ancient gesture, the namaskara mudra, consisting of the two hands joined and held in prayer-like position, is exactly the same as the namaste emblem in use in India today. Its meaning can be understood as "I worship you" or "I pray to you". In sculpture it appears in representations of devotees or attendant and subordinate deities surrounding a major deity. (Banerjea, 1966, p 251)

Numerous as are the mudras associated with sculpture, the mudras accompanying the classical dance are more numerous still. Here, unlike sculpture, the mudra can occur in motion, thus adding a number of possible meanings to a single hand position. These symbolic hand gestures form symbol systems of hundreds of different items through which--along with corresponding movements of the face, eyes, neck, arms, legs, and torso--whole passages from religious texts can be accurately translated, including adjectives, adverbs, and even conjunctions. (Singha, 1967, p 97) Something of the capabilities of this

gesture language appear in the following passage by La Meri, an American dancer who studied and practiced some of the classical dance traditions of India for many years.

The hand-language of India is as complete and expressive as any spoken language. I myself, speaking no Tamil, have conversed with my teacher and colleagues by means of hasta-mudras. I have found them adequate, not only in discovering the underlying principles of my instructor's methods, but even in carrying on the long, feminine, social conversations which were necessary to convince my fellow students that even a "meat eater" could be a rather nice sort of person. Vallathol, the great poet who has revived the Kathakali form [classical dance tradition] in Malabar, is deaf and so converses entirely by means of the beautiful gesture-language of India. (La Meri, 1964 p 27)

Like the sculpture mudras, the dance mudras possess the essential qualities of emblems. They can be directly translated into words, their meaning is understood by the class of dancers and dance-patrons who use them, dancers use them with the deliberate intent of sending particular messages, and the patrons who receive them not only know their meaning but also know that they have been deliberately sent.

In one of his more recent articles, Ekman (1976, p 18) discusses the size of the repertoire of emblems in the various groups studied by him and his associates. He notes that the smallest number of emblems appears to be that of middle-class Americans, less than 100, while the largest seems to be that of Israeli students in the United States, over 250. The great range and variety of India mudras or emblems makes these repertoires seem rather paltry. The detailed study of Indian emblems, classical and modern, and of their relationships

to the manifold aspects of Indian civilization, however, lies far beyond the scope of this study. It offers a fruitful field for future efforts.

Findings and Conclusions

The results of my three-step process of gathering, verifying, and cross-cultural testing of emblems appear in Tables I to V. (See Appendix) These tables include all of the emblems which passed the first two steps. Those gestures which fewer than three of my informants in the second step did not recognize have been excluded. Some of them may well be legitimate emblems which a larger sample of informants would have verified. Others of these excluded gestures may be valid emblems which my informants failed to verify because they originated from an informant of different religious background. Still others might not be emblems but rather other categories of nonverbal behaviour. One gesture, for example, may have been an *illustrator* (defined as a movement directly tied to speech which serves to illustrate what is being said verbally).

(Ekman & Friesen, 1969, p 68) In making this gesture, the informant snapped his fingers and then immediately pointed his index finger to the ground; he explained the meaning of the gesture as emphasizing a point in one's speech.

The generalizations which follow do not include the rejected gestures, however, but rest on the data in the tables. This data conveniently divides into two parts, the first centering around the structural and performance characteristics

of the emblems, the second around their cultural and semantic aspects.

Several interesting types of emblems appear in the data. One of the most unusual is No. 48, a voice emblem (defined as a sound meeting the criteria for an emblem and not a word). (Ekman, 1976, p 16) Ekman notes that such sounds will usually fail to meet the criterion of being unambiguous without knowledge of contextual factors. Since we have already seen that words themselves can be ambiguous without such knowledge, this criterion seems unrealistic. Emblems, like the words they stand for, often depend heavily on context for their meaning. If a cough intended to convey a definite message fails to qualify as an emblem, then what does it qualify for?

Another interesting type of emblem not mentioned in the literature, a two-person emblem, appears in Nos. 54 and 55. Like the act of shaking hands, neither of these two emblems would have any meaning if performed by one person. Such emblems require the cooperation of both persons to convey the same message to each other simultaneously, rather ironic in the case of No. 54 since the message conveyed is the wish to cooperate no further!

The great majority of the emblems in Tables I to V appear to be iconic emblems, since they resemble in some way or other the meaning which they signify. For example, in No. 27 the hands are slapped to the region of the heart, the traditional organ of love, and the meaning conveyed is "I love

you." Some of the emblems appear to be arbitrary emblems, since they do not resemble their significant. Among these might be No. 48, the cough emblem, No. 51, the "What's up?" emblem, and No. 30, the eye wink emblem making an indecent proposition. While one might expect iconically coded emblems to be more comprehensible across culture boundaries, it becomes apparent that this holds true only if the significant, the thing signified, appears in both cultures. Thus, the iconically coded emblem of slapping the inside of the thigh as a challenge, No. 28 was completely misunderstood by North Americans, whose wrestlers challenge each other in a different style.

Sparhawk's (1978) work on Persian emblems reveals another aspect of the subject. She shows clearly that performances with the same configuration have different meanings in different locations, while performances with the same location have different meanings with different configurations. The same phenomena clearly appear in Punjabi emblems. Thus the hand configuration used in food emblems, Nos. 36, 45, and 47, gives a different meaning in the toothache emblem, No. 26, when it shifts from mouth to jaw. Both emblem No. 12 and emblem No. 25 involve the head and a hand, but the different configurations of the hand give two very different meanings, "Crazy" and "Headache" respectively.

Ekman refers to compound and complex emblems. (Ekman, 1976, pp 23-24) The former contain two or more emblems each of which has a different meaning, while the latter include

more than one emblem each of which has the same meaning as the entire emblem. At least one example of each kind can be found in the Punjabi emblem data. The negative emblem represented by a wiggle of the hand or hands appears in several different compound emblems, namely, No. 12 ("Crazy"), No. 21 ("No money"), and No. 24 ("I cannot hear you"). In each of these a different emblem appears along with the negative emblem. Perhaps they would be better called "sub-emblems" since they do not appear to have any independent meanings; they serve the function of designating which part of one's person has nothing--the head, the pockets, or the ear. The negative emblem may be in a different category, an emblem in its own right, since one informant gave it as a separate emblem, though the other informants did not verify it. Perhaps all of these emblems or sub-emblems correspond to morphemes in verbal language, i.e., they possess meaning without necessarily being independent signs. An example of a complex emblem may be No. 51 ("What's up?") in which either the lifted eyebrows or the upraised hand seem able to convey the same meaning.

Another interesting facet of compound and complex emblems has to do with the temporal order of their constituent elements, little discussed in the literature. In some cases like No. 12 ("Crazy") the two component emblems are made sequentially. Perhaps two hands could be used simultaneously for this emblem, but none of my informants suggested it. In other cases like No. 9 ("I am full") the two component emblems

are made simultaneously, and no informant suggested making them sequentially. Future investigators could experiment with the "intelligibility" or "correctness" of sequential emblems demonstrated as simultaneous emblems, or vice versa.

A final area of interest concerning the structural and performance characteristics of emblems is their relationship to other nonverbal behaviour. As an example, Ekman notes that facial expression can have great importance in contextually changing the meaning of an emblem. Thus the "finger" of the United States emblem repertoire can be a joke when accompanied by the right kind of smile or a stinging insult when given with a contemptuous expression. A similar change in meaning through change in facial expression occurs in the two emblems No. 9 ("I am full") and No. 37 ("I am hungry"). The only difference between the two emblems is in the expression of the face, happy in one case, sad in the other. The exact inter-relationships and mutual interactions of all the nonverbal categories posited by Ekman and Friesen seems neglected in their theoretical framework. The categories, largely studied in isolation, need to be fit back together again in the whole from which they came.

Let us turn to the other part of the data, that which centers around the cultural and semantic aspects of emblems. Here too the parallels to verbal language seem too striking to be neglected. I noted earlier that the data suggested Hindu Punjabis could better understand emblems from

fellow Hindus than from Sikh Punjabis. Surely the relatively new field of sociolinguistics could be profitably applied to such data. This field has certainly demonstrated the importance of understanding how social, economic, and religious factors influence the language habits of people. It has also shown the way in which social context affects the use of different language styles, codes, and levels. In Hindi, for example, one can choose one of three levels of pronouns for "You" depending on the social context, i.e., who is superior, who is inferior, who is an intimate friend, or who is a stranger. It seems certain that the insights of sociolinguistics concerning verbal language could be applied to emblems, so closely linked to verbal language, and other types of nonverbal behaviour as well.

One of the most interesting questions about different emblem repertoires is whether they show greater development in some domains than others. The phenomenon of greater vocabulary development of certain domains in some languages has been well-documented. For example, Eskimo languages are reported to distinguish far more different types of snow than other languages whose speakers have neither the experience or the need to rival the Eskimos. The very limited size of emblem vocabularies compared to word vocabularies makes this question difficult to answer, and the data in this study provides no real clues. One possible direction of future research in nonverbal behaviour in India could be to search for expressions

of differences in social and religious status, since the hierarchical caste system still embraces the majority of the inhabitants of India.

The question of the greater development of emblem repertoires in some domains than in others appears in another way in the data, though very tentatively. The responses of North American males and females to a few emblems differed noticeably, though the small number of informants makes the significance dubious. Thus more females than males interpreted the namaste gesture, No. 50, to be connected with religion or praying, the bread-making emblem, No. 38, to be connected with cooking, and the eye wink emblem, No. 42, to be connected with stopping the conversation. One might very hesitatingly suggest that North American females are somewhat more sensitive than males to nonverbal signals in the domains of religion, cooking, and interpersonal communication.

The most interesting and definite conclusions that emerge from this study have to do with the contrasts between culture-specific emblems, those understood only in the culture of their occurrence, and pan-cultural emblems, those understood across cultural boundaries. Efron raised the question in passing (Efron, 1972, p 123) and subsequent investigators, especially Ekman and Friesen, have made it one of their major concerns. (Ekman & Friesen, 1969, pp 66-67; Ekman & Friesen, 1972, pp 364-365; Ekman, 1976, pp 18-19) My data supports their general assertion that pan-cultural emblems tend to be

those which refer to body functions and the simplest human activities, while culture-specific emblems tend to be those which refer to more complex human activities. (Ekman & Friesen, 1969, p 66)

A glance at Table I, which contains emblems very

accurately understood by my North American informants, reveals that they consist mainly of simple interpersonal directions ("Be quiet"), elementary statements of physical states ("I am cold"), and basic replies ("Yes" and "No"). Table III, containing emblems very inaccurately understood, indicates that they refer chiefly to complex human activities unique to Indian culture or performed in a markedly different manner from North American culture. For example, the seemingly innocuous eye wink emblem, No. 30, has to be understood in the context of a society which segregates men from women much more sharply than our own. In a society where free social intercourse between the sexes is quite restricted, amorous gestures are likely to have a much greater impact. On a more trivial scale, the money emblem, No. 31, seemed unaccountably difficult for my informants to grasp until one reflects that probably many more of the everyday transactions in India can be carried out without using bills. Hence the most common emblem for money reflects this experience, different from that of North America where bills are probably more widely used for daily business. The hermaphrodite emblem, No. 34, represents something so totally foreign to ordinary North American experience that only a North American who had lived in India and noticed the gestures of these people as they danced could have guessed it.

One emblem in this collection, at least, indicates the possibility of cultural borrowing. The fists emblem for fighting, No. 18, seems very likely to have been borrowed from

the West. Unlike wrestling, boxing has never been and is not now a popular sport in India. The comments of two of my informants in the second step strengthen this view. One noted that this emblem was little used, while the other--of rural background--discounted it as an emblem and said that the traditional bamboo stave held in readiness indicated the intention to fight. There may be other borrowed emblems in this list, but considerable research would be required to determine which they were.

In conclusion, it becomes apparent that the study of emblems offers fascinating insights into a number of different areas such as: the complex correlations between verbal and nonverbal behaviour; the problems of cross-cultural communication; local and regional varieties of nonverbal behaviour; the historical development of nonverbal behaviour; cultural change; and many others. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of all is the degree to which certain widely understood pan-cultural emblems approach that ancient dream of mankind--a universally understood language.

APPENDIXTABLE IVery Accurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	Index finger on lips	Be quiet	Interpersonal Directions	Given by 4 informants; confirmed by 4 informants; understood by 10 informants.
2	Index finger wiggled	Come here	Interpersonal Directions	Understood by all 10 informants.
3	Hand patted on seat	Sit down	Interpersonal Directions	Understood by all 10 informants.
4	Hand held out vertically	Stop; enough	Interpersonal Directions	"Stop" understood by all 10 informants.
5	Hand, palm up, snapped up	Get up	Interpersonal Directions	Understood by all 10 informants. In India used by superiors to inferiors.
6	Hand, at side, flicked sideways	Do not touch (my feet)	Interpersonal Directions	Context: inferior stoops to touch superior's feet.
7	Hands out with palms down and moved up and down	Calm down	Interpersonal Directions	Context: person standing in front of a crowd.
8	Arms hugged across chest, head tucked down	I am cold	Own Physical State	Understood by all 10 informants.
9	Hand pats stomach, smile	I am full	Own Physical State	Compare with No. 37.
10	Hand on biceps	I am strong	Own Physical State	Understood by all 10 informants.
11	Hands together at side of bent head	I am sleepy; Go to sleep	Own Physical State	One or other of the meanings understood by all 10 informants. Could also fall into interpersonal directions domain.

TABLE I (Continued)

Very Accurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
12	Index finger pointed to temple, then hand wiggled	Crazy, stupid; I do not understand	Insults	Hand wiggle functions as independent negating element; see No. 24. Only 1 informant guessed "I do not understand".
13	Head nodded; close by	Yes, Agreement	Replies	Meaning depends on context. See No. 35.
14	Nose twisted to left or right	So-so	Replies	9 of 10 informants guessed this correctly.
15	Nose wrinkled	I do not like, agree	Replies	Can refer to a statement, smell, etc.
16	Head shaken horizontally	No, disagreement	Replies	All 10 informants understood this emblem.
17	Hands, palms in, held in front	Fat	Physical appearance of person	Hands may also be moved slightly back and forth.
18	Fists held up	Fighting	Challenges & Threats	One informant said not much used; another said not fists but holding a bamboo stave ready was sign of fighting. May be borrowed emblem.
19	Sleeves rolled up	Fighting	Challenges & Threats	One informant said even a short-sleeved shirt can be used.
20	Empty pocket shown	No money	Other: Money	

NOTE: Very accurately understood means that 9 or 10 of the informants in the third step grasped the correct meaning of the emblem.

The domains used come from those employed in Harold G. Johnson et alia, "Communicative Body Movements: American Emblems," Semiotica XV, 4 (1975), pp 335-353, with some additions of my own.

TABLE I (Continued)Very Accurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
21	Hands slapped on pockets, then wiggled	No money	Other: Money	Hand wiggle similar to negation sign in Nos. 12 and 24.
22	Index finger pointed at one's chest	I	Other: Miscellaneous	
23	Index finger pointed at another	You	Other: Miscellaneous	

TABLE IIAccurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
24	Index finger pointed to ear and then hand wiggled	I cannot hear you	Interpersonal Directions	Hand wiggle the same as that in No. 12, similar to that in No. 21.
25	Hand on head, pain on face	Headache	Own Physical State	Compound emblem; both hand and face required.
26	Joined fingers and thumb held to back of lower jaw	Toothache	Own Physical State	Shape of hand like that in food emblems, Nos. 36, 45, and 47.
27	Both hands slapped to L side of chest	I love you	Own Affect	Often used as a teasing gesture.

NOTE: Accurately understood means that at least 7 of the informants in the third step grasped the correct meaning of the emblem.

TABLE IIIVery Inaccurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
28	Palm of right hand slaps inside of right thigh	I challenge you to a fight	Challenges & Threats	This emblem is used by wrestlers in India. None of the 10 informants came close to its meaning.
29	Palm of right hand slaps forehead, and then is held out palm up.	What bad luck!	Own Affect	Several informants guessed that this was an emblem meaning "I forgot."
30	Wink of the right eye	Indecent proposition	Other: Attitudes toward others	All informants took this to be a friendly, possibly flirtatious, greeting. In India it can start fights. The context is vital here--usually a man uses it to a woman.
31	Right thumb flicks index or middle finger	Money	Other: Money	Only one informant guessed that it was flicking a coin.
32	Thumb and index finger of each hand twist real or imaginary mustache	I am superior to or stronger than you	Other: Attitudes toward others	Most informants realized that the emblem dealt with a mustache, but only one guessed anything of the meaning. In India a mustache is connected with male pride; a defeated man's mustache is said to droop.
33	Both ear lobes are pulled down between thumb and index finger	I swear I will never do it again	Other: Miscellaneous	No informant came close to the correct meaning. Several guessed it had something to do with hearing. Both this and No. 32 have exact idiomatic translations in Hindi.

TABLE III (Continued)

Very Inaccurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
34	Hands held as if for applause and right hand palm slaps left hand palm, then twists sharply to face chest	Hermaphrodite	Other: Miscellaneous	No informant had the remotest idea of the meaning of this emblem. It refers to a class of hermaphrodite transvestite dancers who make this or similar gestures during their performances.

NOTE: Very inaccurately understood means that at most one of the informants in the third step guessed anything like the correct meaning.

TABLE IV

Inaccurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
35	Head nodded; at a distance	Come here	Interpersonal Directions	Two informants grasped the correct meaning of this emblem. Its meaning depends on context. See No. 13.
36	Joined fingers and thumb of R hand held to mouth, then to palm up in front of mouth	I am hungry	Own Physical State	Three informants guessed meaning. Shape of hand is that used in dining in India.
37	Hand pats stomach, sorrow on face	I am hungry	Own Physical State	Compare No. 9. The only difference is the expression on the face. No informant guessed the meaning, which suggests different cultural outlooks on food. Several guessed that it meant too full, however, which was the meaning attributed to it by one Indian informant.

TABLE IV (Continued)Inaccurately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
38	Hands slapped together back and forth, gently	Making Indian bread--chapatis	Other: Miscellaneous	Several informants, more women than men, guessed that it had something to do with cooking, and in some cases with making bread. Only one specifically compared it with a similar bread--the tortilla. A doubtful emblem. May be a charade or a pantomime.
39	Thumb placed along index finger part-way down from tip	Small; this small	Other: Measurement	Two or three informants guessed close. One confused it with the O.K. emblem of the U.S.A.

NOTE: Inaccurately understood means that two or three informants in the third step guessed the correct meaning.

TABLE VModerately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
40	Hand in front, palm down, flapped several times	Come here	Interpersonal Directions	Much like the Southern Italian emblem illustrated in Efron's <u>Gesture, Race and Culture</u> p 201.
41	Hand-washing motion	Wash my hands	Interpersonal Directions	Majority of informants understood that emblem indicated desire to wash hands. In India the emblem would signify its user's desire to have his hands washed by having someone else pour water over them.

TABLE V (Continued)

Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
42	Wink of the right eye	Stop talking (about what we have been discussing)	Interpersonal Directions	Context vital here--two people talking, third approaches, one of the first two uses the emblem. Most of the female informants grasped the meaning correctly; males did not do as well.
43	Right arm waved from back to front in sweeping gesture while walking	Follow me	Interpersonal Directions	Most of the male informants grasped the correct meaning; females did not do as well, interpreting it in terms of greater equality or even subordination (keep up with me, pass me by).
44	Right wrist snaps palm sharply outwards once or twice	Go away	Interpersonal Directions	Several informants interpreted this as lack of agreement with what was being said or a desire to end discussion of the matter; the latter meaning was also suggested by one Indian informant.
45	Joined fingers and thumb move back and forth to mouth, left hand held on abdomen	I am hungry	Own Physical State	Many informants recognized that the emblem had something to do with eating, but only four guessed the correct meaning, and one thought it meant having eaten too much! See my comments for No. 37. Note that the hand shape is the same as that for Nos. 26, 36, and 47.
46	Cupped hand at mouth	I am thirsty	Own Physical State	Only one informant got the correct meaning, though several recognized that it had to do with drinking.

TABLE V (Continued)

Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
47	Joined fingers and thumb of right hand held at mouth	I am hungry	Own Physical State	No informant guessed the correct meaning though several realized that it was connected with food or eating. See my comments for No. 37, and compare the shape of the hand with Nos. 26, 36, and 45.
48	Two or three coughs	Challenge; warning; insult	Insults	Five or six informants realized that this emblem--the only voice emblem collected--could signify negative feelings. Here context was important--two men meeting on a public thoroughfare, and one coughing intentionally. One informant said that such behaviour between old rivals could lead to open conflict in Punjabi villages.
49	Fist of right hand held out in front, arm bent, fist waved back and forth horizontally	Obscene insult or challenge	Insults	While most informants realized this was a sign of hostility, only one, a male, realized its obscenity.
50	Palms of hands placed together and held vertically in front; the <u>namaste</u> gesture.	Hello or goodbye	Greetings & Departures	The context given the informants was two people meeting on the street. Only three or four recognized it as a greeting despite the context, all of the men. Most of the women connected it with praying or religion. The

TABLE V (Continued)

Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
50				<u>namaste gesture is</u> also used in prayer, but that would be a different context than the one given to the informants.
51	R hand in front, twisted upwards with spread fingers, eyebrows lifted	What is going on? What's up?	Replies	This is a very wide- spread gesture in North India.
52	Hand rests on abdomen, then moved up and out so that palm is up	Pregnant	Physical Appearance of Person	Men and women guessed about equally on this one, two of each getting it correct. Several informants associated it with throwing up.
53	Thumb and index finger held together at their tips	Very small	Other: Measurement	About half the infor- mants guessed close to the meaning of this emblem. One informant confused it with the O.K. emblem of the U.S.A.
54	R hand made into a fist with the little finger sticking out, then sharply snapped away from little finger on someone else's hand in the same position	Our friendship is over	Other: Attitudes toward	Only two informants came close to the meaning of this emblem, and by rights it belongs in the preceding table. Since it is so closely related to the following emblem, however, I left them together. This and the following are the only two-person emblems in this collection. Both have special idiomatic translations in Punjabi.

TABLE V (Continued)Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
55	Index finger of right hand hooked, rest of hand in fist, then joined firmly with index finger on someone else's hand	We are friends again	Other: Attitudes toward others	Four or five informants came close to the meaning of this emblem. Both it and the preceding emblem are used primarily by children and young people.
56	Throat cut with index finger	I will kill you, beat you	Challenges & Threats	While the majority of the informants guessed this one, the women did somewhat better than the men. One informant noted that it could be done in jest or in anger and that the whole hand could be used too.
57	Whole hand or index finger pointed upwards, eyes raised upwards	God knows, understands	Other: Miscellaneous	About half of the informants came quite close to the meaning of this emblem, while most realized that it had something to do with a divine being.
58	Both arms extended to the sides	This big	Other: Measurement	While all informants realized that this emblem had to do with size, some interpreted it as "large" or "very large".
59	Both arms held in front with forearms horizontal, hands moved in circles	Follow me in speaking, singing	Interpersonal Directions	Here most informants guessed close to the meaning of the emblem, but the explanation of the context--public singing or recitation--gave too much of the meaning away.

TABLE V (Continued)Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
60	Head bent	Respect	Own Affect	While 3 of 4 Indian informants in the second step agreed on "respect" as one meaning for this gesture, they suggested enough other meanings, as did the 10 informants of the third step, to cast its status as an emblem into doubt. A true emblem would not suggest so many meanings or be as ambiguous.
61	Palm with fingers together pointed in direction of a person with contemptuous expression on face	Just look at who is passing by! (Snob, swelled head)	Other: Attitudes towards others	While my Indian informants largely agreed on the meaning of this gesture, and the majority of my 10 informants came close to the meaning, the extreme importance of the facial expression in suggesting the meaning makes me uneasy about calling it an emblem.
62	Right hand on someone else's head	Blessing	Other: Attitudes toward others	While all of my informants recognized this as a tender, protective gesture, only two specifically mentioned blessing. All of my Indian informants were quite definite about this emblem, since it forms part of well-known social interaction often in a religious context and is translatable by a specific Hindi word.

TABLE V (Continued)Moderately Understood Emblems

<u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Domain</u>	<u>Comments</u>
63	Hands held with thumb and little finger outstretched, other fingers together, and placed on either hip or on the left hip, while hips move back and forth two or three times	Good music (to dance to)	Other: Miscellaneous	Since my description of the context included a festive occasion with crowds and music, my informants had no difficulty in recognizing the expression of a wish to dance, though several took it as an invitation to dance. Thus it is likely that my description of the context elicited the answer. I feel doubtful about the emblem nature of this gesture complex since it seems partly like a spontaneous reaction to music rather than a deliberate attempt to convey a message.

NOTE: Moderately understood means that somewhere around half of the informants in the third step guessed the correct meaning or close to it.

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